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Subject: The Evils of Anxious Forethought.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

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SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

- | | |
|---|--|
| I. The Duty of Using One's Life for Others. | XV. Works Meet for Repentance. |
| II. The God of Comfort. | XVI. Malign Spiritual Influences. |
| III. The Nobility of Confession. | XVII. The Old and the New. |
| IV. Self-Control Possible to All. | XVIII. The Hidden Christ. |
| V. Pilate, and his Modern Imitators. | XIX. Well-Wishing not Well-Doing. |
| VI. The Strong to Bear with the Weak. | XX. Sphere of the Christian Minister. |
| VII. Growth in the Knowledge of God. | XXI. Suffering, the Measure of Worth. |
| VIII. Contentment in all Things. | XXII. The Victory of Hope in Sorrow. |
| IX. Abhorrence of Evil. | XXIII. The Crime of Degrading Men. |
| X. Privileges of the Christian. | XXIV. Self-Conceit in Morals. |
| XI. The Love of Money. | XXV. Morality, the Basis of Piety. |
| XII. Divine Influence on the Human Soul. | XXVI. The Trinity. |
| XIII. Moral Affinity, the True Ground of Unity. | XXVII. The Family, as an American Institution. |
| XIV. The Value of Deep Feelings. | |

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

- I. THE WAY OF COMING TO CHRIST.
- II. CONDUCT, THE INDEX OF FEELING.
- III. THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.
- IV. RETRIBUTION AND REFORMATION.
- V. COUNTING THE COST.
- VI. SCOPE AND FUNCTION OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.
- VII. HUMAN IDEAS OF GOD.
- VIII. THE GRACIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

ANY BACK NUMBERS CAN BE FURNISHED.

EVILS OF ANXIOUS FORETHOUGHT.

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 9, 1869.

"WHICH of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?"—MATT. vi. 27.

A LIFE without forethought or plan must be weak and fruitless; and if a whole community so live, they are savage, sensuous, and degraded. There can be no civilization without enterprise, and no enterprise without plans for the future. A wise foresight is the only way of making our days long; for the present takes its dimensions from the reach forward which our minds take. The diameter of each day is measured by the stretch of thought—not by the rising and setting of the sun. The want of care and consideration is the fault of the savage state. Too great a stress of thought, and too anxious a foresight, is the fault of civilized life.

It was not against the forecast of wise and enterprising industry that our Saviour spoke, but against an outlook into the future which wears and frets the soul.

Looking forward is not wrong; but a *painful* forelooking is. Pain and sorrow in a moderate degree are salutary; but they must be derived from the present. The future belongs to hope, and not to fear. No man has a right to convert the outlying future into a storm-ground, and draw in upon himself its chills and blasts. It does no good. It does much harm. It is acting from illusions, and not from sober realities. It is putting one's self under the influence of a disordered imagination. It is a process which breeds a malign faith. The past belongs to Gratitude and Regret; the present to Contentment and Work; the future to Hope and Trust.

Our Lord's question, which we have taken for our text, was not put in a spirit of humor; yet in its nature it is exquisitely though gravely humorous. He lays down, first, the command in the 25th verse—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."

This is briefly argued: first, from the intrinsic superiority of the spirit or the soul to its material surroundings. We ought not to sac-

rifice the soul's happiness for the sake of any material good that surrounds us. "Is not," said the Master, "the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" Will you disturb the one, fever it, and destroy the satisfaction of the other, by seeking for these external comforts? Is not the soul's quiet happiness and trust of more value than pleasing bodily conditions? Why sacrifice its contentment for the sake of pleasing the senses, which ought to be our servants?

Moreover, it is needless, our Master argues, inasmuch as all men stand in such an order of nature that they are sure to be supplied by an easy and moderate exertion of their powers. God's provision in natural law for the wants of living creatures is so ample, and so easily availed of, that even birds know how to get their food. Lower yet are flowers. Birds know how to fly. Flowers do not. Birds have some slight provision. Flowers none. "They toil not, neither do they spin." Yet God feeds one, and royally robes the other. How? By direct volition? That does not necessarily follow. The natural course of law is such that there is ample provision and bounty for all kinds of beings in creation; and it is so easily accessible that even birds, and lower yet, flowers themselves, know how to get what they want out of natural law, without care, and without anxious thought. "Are ye not much better," said the Saviour, "than they?" In several senses better: better as being higher in the scale, nearer God, and so, more near to the companionship and sympathy of God, and therefore less likely to be neglected and to suffer. Better, also, than birds and flowers, as being better able to shake down, as it were, from the boughs of natural law, all the fruit that the day wants. A man ought to be ashamed if a bird can get a living, and he can not! What is the use of all the difference between a bird and a man, if it only leads to vexations?

But, next, it is tersely argued that anxiety does no good. "Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?" No man can picture to himself this illustration without a smile, that knows how to smile at all. Imagine a short man, dissatisfied with his shortness, trying to grow tall by fretting about it, ambitiously swelling, and saying, "I am but five feet high; how on earth shall I get to be six feet?" Will it do any good? Is there any thing more preposterous? And yet that is the very figure which our Saviour employs in respect to the conduct which you yourselves are guilty of every day. Which of you, by taking thought, can add one inch, a particle, to his stature? There is no relation between anxiety and the result which you seek to obtain.

I am not fond of finding fault with the authorized version of the Bible; but there are two passages of importance which are either lost or much diminished in force, from the fading out of the meaning of the words, originally much stronger than in our authorized version. One

case is, the use of the word "charity," as in the immortal thirteenth of Corinthians, where it should have been *love*. The other case is in the text—"thought," instead of anxiety. In the time of our translation, "thought" was used to signify *excess* of thought; as where Bacon says, "Queen Catharine Parr died of thought"—that is to say, of anxious, exciting thought; or, to give it another and popular form, broken-hearted. When we speak of a *broken heart*, we mean a person that has used up his life by excessive feeling or excessive excitement. The word "thought" constantly misleads, because in our time it signifies a normal and indispensable intellectual process. It is the first product of reason; and reason is the first product of a true religion. But in our text, and in that whole passage, the Saviour is not speaking of thought as we understand it, but of exacerbating thought, of thought that is hot, that dries up the fountains of life.

Every man is better for thinking forward up to the line of painfulness; but the moment that forelooking touches the experience of fret and suffering, it ceases to be beneficial. Thinking is right; *painful* thinking is not. Forelooking is right; *anxious* forelooking is not.

A wise enterprise, which to-day arranges for to-morrow, and for next week, and for next year; which reckons; which makes the present day as long and as large as all coming time—that is not unwise; but looking forward to the least thing with grinding anxiety, with gloom and suffering, is not right. It is not profitable, either.

The faculties which produce this suffering, and the circumstances under which it is produced, make anxiety for the future unprofitable; and that, too, in proportion as it is painful. In so far as the human mind has any control and management of things in the future—and it has much—it works more surely and more wisely when it works pleasantly than when it works painfully. And this is true of every faculty. The painful working of any faculty is just so far diseased. The pleasurable working of any faculty is just so far healthy. The man that works so that he has pain and sorrow in it, may accomplish something, but he is using his tools to the poorest advantage. The man who works so that he does not know that it is work, and sings, and is full of cheer, is using his mind in its highest and most remunerative way.

The painfulness in the case of those who forelook is an indication of one of two things—either that the mind is carried up beyond its normal condition, and so is diseased, sick, for the time being; or that it is acting under the undue pressure of malign feelings. In either case the judgment is shaken, and the mind is unfitted to deal with affairs. When the mind is excited to that degree that its operations are painful, it is sick, its functions are not wholesome, and its results are not to be trusted. The whole success of life depends upon the wholesomeness of a man's mind. The ship-master that navigates the sea

beyond the sight of land, is dependent upon the correctness of his chronometer and his compass. If the instruments of navigation fail him, every thing fails him. And what these are to navigation on the sea, and in a ship, the human mind is to our navigation of life. And any thing that disturbs the balance of the mind so far invalidates the whole voyage of life.

Accurate perceptions; the perception of our comprehensive relations; a just judgment of the forces which are acting on us, and which we are employing upon others; a nice sense of human life—it is these things that determine daily wisdom. It is justness in the use of our perceptive reason, and in the use of our reflective reason. It is what is called “common sense”—by which I understand a just judgment in common things. Where a man has a mind which is so sensitive and so accurate that it is perpetually played amidst familiar and daily events, and always with a wise gauge and measurement and decision, we say that he has *common* sense—that is, *good* sense—in respect to multifarious, minute, common things. There are a great many men who can judge accurately in regard to comprehensive things, where they can set a problem and work it out. They have *uncommon* sense. It is said that they are philosophers, or men of genius, or what not. Frequently we hear it said of such men, that they have *great* sense; but it is philosophic or artistic sense, and not common sense. But a man who has the faculty of judging of things accurately, on every side, instantly, and in all their varying phases has justness of perception and judgment in regard to the million little things which are constantly occurring to him—he has the best of sense—*common* sense. If a man can have only one kind of sense, let him have common sense. If he has that and uncommon sense too, he is a great deal better off.

Although cake is decidedly better than bread, once in a while, yet for every day eating bread is a great deal better than cake. God never made any thing that was so good to drink all the time as cold water; and the evidence of this is, that every man washes his mouth out with water, whatever else he drinks. If it be milk, if it be any of the long catalogue of artificial drinks, still the best taste for all the time is no taste at all, in the mouth. Water gives that, and nothing else does.

And so it is in regard to the economies of the mind. The best sense for all work and for all time is common sense. Discrimination, quick judgment, just judgment, in minute things, operating all the time—that is the best.

Now, it is just this thought, this care, this anxiety, this burdensome forelooking and disturbance, which makes it impossible for a man to judge accurately in regard to events as an intelligent creature. This spirit of excessive emotion, this painful forelooking, distorts, magnifies, blurs, and blots the future. It sets facts all atremble with mere

imagination before us. It creates phantoms and illusions. It suppresses some things, and exaggerates others. When we look upon facts, upon things, it is difficult for us to exaggerate them, because to our senses the lines of matter and their proportions and number bear almost unchangeable relation. The brain is indeed very highly disorganized when things do not look to the senses as they are. But things may be immensely exaggerated and distorted by an overheated mind. Anxiety about the future, arising from malign feelings, also is joined closely to this disturbance. By *malign feelings*, I mean undue pride, vanity, avarice, and selfishness; and if you take an estimate of those things in the future which trouble you, I think you will find that ninety-nine parts in a hundred, are things anticipated, or desired, or dreaded, on account of vanity, or selfishness, or avarice, or some malign passion. If you will take an account of the vexations that over-anxiety of the future brings to you, you will find that they almost all spring from malign passions.

Microscopists are occupied now in analyzing dust; and it is found that the dust that settles on your pillow on a summer day is made up of threads of wool, and bits of silk, and fragments of cotton, and specks of horn, and all manner of soils. Little rubbings off of about every thing there is in creation get into the dust. It is a microcosm, a specimen, of about every thing there is in your neighborhood, at any rate.

And so, the vexations that come to us from looking down into the future, are dust rubbed off, mostly from vanity, from pride, from avarice, from appetite, from the various malign feelings. If you take these thousand little frets that thought broods, and that make you unhappy; if you lay aside physical causes, and come to mental, you will find that most of them are selfish, and so are malign. And when a man broods anxiously, looking down into the future, two things take place: first, he loses the use of the correct instrument, of his mind, by this over-heating; and secondly, he brings his mind under the influence of these malign feelings, which seem to rise up and take possession of that great untrodden pasture-ground of the future. His mind is brought insidiously under the dominion of these things.

In a critical time the man of the household goes to the window, and looks out, and says, "Who can tell what those signs mean on the horizon? Who can tell what that banner means? Who can tell what armed host that is that is coming?" And thousands of men say to Fear, "Go, sit in the window and watch;" and Fear, sitting in the soul's window, and looking far down into the future, says, "I see something there." "What is it?" says Avarice. "Loss of money—bankruptcy—trouble is coming." "O Lord! O Lord! Trouble in the future. It is all trouble. Man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly up-

ward. A few days, and full of trouble. O trouble! trouble!" And for days and weeks the man goes round crying, "Trouble! Trouble!" What is it? Money. Nothing in the world but money. It is avarice that has made all that fuss about the future—all that dust. It was because it was not golden dust that the man was troubled.

Fear still sits in the window. "What seest thou?" says Vanity. "Whisperings are abroad," says Fear. "Men are pointing at you—or they will, as soon as you come to a point of observation." "O my good name!" says the man. "All that I have done; all that I have laid up—what will become of that? Where is my reputation going? What will become of me when I lose it, and when folks turn away from me? O trouble! trouble!—it is coming!" What is it? Fear is sitting in the window of the soul, and looking into the future, and interpreting the signs thereof to the love of approbation in its coarsest and lowest condition.

Fear still sits looking into the future, and Pride, coming up, says, "What is it that you see?" "I see," says Fear "your castle robbed. I see you toppled down from your eminence. I see you under base men's feet. I see you weakened. I see you disesteemed. I see your power scattered and gone." "O Lord! what a world is this!" says Pride.

Now, that man has not had a particle of trouble. Fear sat in the window and lied. And Pride cried, and Vanity cried, and Avarice cried—and ought to cry. Fear sat and told lies to them all. For there was not one of those things, probably, down there. Did Fear see them? Yes. But Fear has a kaleidoscope in its eye, and every time it turns it takes a new form. It is filled with broken glass, and it gives false pictures continually. Fear does not see right. It is forever seeing wrong. And it is stimulated by other feelings. Pride stimulates it; and Vanity stimulates it; and Lust stimulates it; and Love itself finds, sometimes, no better business than to send Fear on its bad errands. For Love cries at the cradle, saying, "Oh! the child will die!" It will not die. It will get well. And then you will not be ashamed that you prophesied that it would die. You put on mourning in advance. "Where will my family be? Where will all my children go? What will become of me?" says Love in its lower moods. Love without faith is as bad as faith without love.

So Fear sits in the window to torment the lower form of all our good feelings and all our malign feelings. And under such circumstances how can a man do any thing? He has smoked glass before his eyes when his feelings get before them, and they are in a morbid state.

Again, the over-excited and painful forelooking which is forbidden in Scripture not only destroys a wise and accurate judgment by which

men avail themselves of natural laws, but it brings them under the power of shadows, and imaginations, and phantoms which they fight without pause, and upon which they spend their strength for nothing. Taking the average of men's lives, they suffer more from things that never happen than from things that do happen. How many times do you hear men say, "I do not so much care what the event is, if it will only come to pass and be done with. Let me know what it is, and I can bear it; but I can not bear suspense." No, you can not bear suspense. The executioner's ax or the hangman's cord is not half so hard to bear, as standing and asking, "Will the ax smite?" or, "Will the cord strangle?" Bankruptcy is not half so hard to bear as the fear of bankruptcy. Sickness is not half so hard to bear as the apprehension that you are going to break down and be sick. Bereavement itself, oftentimes, is not half so hard to bear as the dread of bereavement. Many a mother bears up over the coffin better than she did over the cradle. It is astonishing to see how a man of a lively imagination, of a warm temperament, and of great eagerness and intensity of thought, will fill up the future—the hunting-ground of the thoughts—with these imaginary phantoms. They do not even take on form. Long before it rains, it is cloudy. Long before troubles come, men are brooded over by sorrow—by "low spirits," as it is said. They are dull. They are lifeless. They are full of fear. They have no impetus such as hope and courage give, on account of that which seems to be coming.

But how many times, in summer, has that black cloud which was full of mighty storms, and which came rising, and opening, and swinging through the air, gone by without having a drop of rain in it! It was a wind-cloud. And after it had all disappeared, men took breath and said, "We need not have cocked up the hay in such a hurry;" or, "We need not have run ourselves out of breath to get shelter under this tree." And how many times have there been clouds rolled up in men's heaven, which have apparently been full of bolts of trouble, but which have not had a trouble in them! And when they are gone, men forget to get any wisdom. They do not say, "Next time I will do better." The next time they do just the same thing. Of the thought that excited them, that haunted them, that fevered them, that disturbed their sleep, setting them whirling around in eddies of thought, when they get past it, they say, "All that I suffered for nothing." But will you be any wiser for that experience? Probably not. You have the bad habit of looking into the future with a hot brain; and you will not cure yourself of it by any amount of fear.

Men get into a state, sometimes, in which they rather want anxiety and trouble. As poisons become stimulants, so these corrosions and cares not unfrequently become almost indispensable. There are many

people who not only suffer, but *seek* suffering. They look at every thing on the dark side. If you present the bright side to them, they do not want to see that. They are in a minor key, and they want every thing to wail. They not only are sick, but do not want to get well. They do not want to have people say to them, "You look better to day than you did yesterday." If one says to them, "I congratulate you on having fewer pains," they resent it, and say, "I have not fewer pains. I never suffered so much in all my life." They begin to have a morbid desire for sympathy on account of trouble. They are very much like what are called "weeping" trees. They have a downward tendency; and if you undertake to make them straight, you break them. They are determined to be weeping-willows. There are many people of whom it may be said that they are never happy unless they are miserable!

Ah! I think that one reason why angels never go to theatres is, that there is no theatre that has such comedies as human life. There are buffoons, there are comedians, innumerable, high and low, going through the most grotesque plays. They do not know it themselves. Oh! Shakespeare never wrote such comedies and such tragedies as are found in human life. The world is full of these things. Angels see them, and you can, if you will judge of life, its congruities and incongruities, from a higher, a more rational, and a more spiritual standpoint.

We see many curious phenomena in what is called "biological science," where the audience crowd the hall, and the mesmerizer, or necromancer, or whatever he is called, puts a boy under the influence of his mind, and tells him that he tastes tobacco, and the boy thinks he does taste tobacco; or says to him, "That is a lion," and the boy thinks it is a lion; or puts a bunch of crumpled papers in his hand, and tells him that they are flowers, and the boy smells of them, and thinks they are flowers—and it is all an illusion. The audience see it, and are convulsed with laughter, it is so absurd. And yet, there is, probably, not a single man that is not doing things that are just as absurd—running from gorgons; running from difficulties here and there; running after flowers that are dried and miserable husks, and running away from flowers that are real and fragrant; running after all manner of fantastic things, because his hot, creative, and distempered imagination is looking into the future, and seeing things not to be seen by the reason—after all the phantoms, and all the whole wild array of sights that are created in a man's mind.

How can a man, under such circumstances, be either healthy or happy? How can life be other than a creak and a groan?

Anxiety, by putting men thus through these false paces and attitudes, destroys the possibility of their using their reason or their moral

sense advantageously. So then all your anxiety is loss. "What good does it do?" says the Master. "Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?" Birds and flowers, without thinking or working, get all that they need; and so can you—all that you really need. A vast proportion of the events that you foresee, and dread, have no reality; so, what is the use of thinking and worrying about them? It not only does no good, but actually does harm.

This painful anxiety takes away from men all that steadiness and hopefulness and courage which comes from a belief in a divine special providence. Men are all atheists when they are afraid. Fear is atheistic. "Where is now thy God?" said the seafarer and the crucifier. "Where is my God?" says Fear. There is no God, to Fear. He is gone, or never existed.

Men in enterprising nations come to have extravagant notions of their supreme power in managing affairs and fortune. While men are young and healthy, and are on the *first breath*, as it is said—while they are making their first race—they come to have an unwarrantable sense of how skillful they are and of how certain skill and power and enterprise are to bring results. But when men are broken down; when they are brought into emergencies; when with the utmost thought and painstaking and skill they fail where before they succeeded—then they are apt to be discouraged.

Men are very much like horses, that are very unlike oxen. You may put an ox at a stone, or a root, and he will pull once, twice, twenty times—from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same—stupid fellow! Put a horse at a load, and he will pull magnificently once or twice, contorting every muscle; but having failed in the first or second trial, he will not pull again, and you can not make him.

Most men are very much like the horse. Few have the ox in them. Most men are fiery. They are fierce in their confidence at first. But when they have failed once or twice, when they have made one or two brave but unsuccessful efforts, they fall back, and say, "No use." In prosperity men are unduly elated, and in adversity they are unduly depressed.

Now men's confidence in their power is excessive. It was not their power by which they succeeded—at any rate, in the beginning. It was the ministration of divine laws; it was the impulse of the divine breath, that pervades universal being. I do not believe that men think good thoughts, or have good spiritual emotions, except by that pabulum of the soul, God's Spirit, that is like an atmosphere throughout the universe. And the reason why men succeeded at all, was the divine power in natural law, or in direct impulse or inspiration. When, therefore, they fall back and are discouraged, not recognizing

that their power came largely from God, they forget, also, that God's power continues just as much when they are on their backs as when they are on their feet. And so when men are in despondency, they do not see any God here, or there, or yonder. They are godless. They are without God, and, as you might well suppose that they would be, they are without hope, in this world.

It is true that men have power; but it is also true that their power moves in very narrow limits of liberty. And even within those limits, men employ their faculty of using natural law, which God has given to them, and which he retains in his own hands in larger measure. You have power in the conduct of affairs, because you know how to use the laws of light, and gravity, and motion, and heat, and electricity. But you do not exhaust the capacity to use natural law. God can do it from his side as well as you can from yours, and to a much greater extent than you can. And that is what we mean by *providence*. We mean by it the capacity and the disposition of men universally to use natural law; and by *God's providence* I mean God's capacity to use natural laws, and make them serve men.

When a man, then, lives in an overweening confidence of his power to use natural law, and he does not attribute any thing to God, if his power fails, from any reason, he takes no comfort in the thought, "Though my power over natural law ceases, or I am out of joint with the course of events, God's power does not cease." But the peculiar blessedness of the true Christian, who believes in a special providence, is, that the heavens are full of God, that human affairs are full of God, and that men are so controlled that it may be said literally, that, to every man who puts his soul in communication with God, "all things shall work together for good." But if a man is perpetually looking into the future with despondency, where is his faith that God rules? Where is the help that he gets from the consideration that, though his power may have failed, and though his affairs may have been abortive, there is a power that is higher than his, working for him; a wisdom that is better than his, watching for him; and a heart that is truer than his, loving him and caring for him.

It is this confidence in God's providence, it is this faith in special, daily, minute and particular providence, that carries a man almost without thought through life. It is the spring that is interposed between the jolt and the rider in a carriage. It is this faith in divine providence in human affairs, in anxieties, in corrosive cares, in harrowing fears, that lifts a man up above all imaginary troubles, and relieves him from the jolt of all real troubles.

But it will be asked, "Can a man hold himself to the healthy line of action? Can a man think just far enough, and then not think any further?" He can not; and that is the reason why I preach it. You

ought to learn it. A man that is a scholar can take a book and read right along, and understand the meaning of what he reads. Can every body do it? No. Every body that has learned to do it can, and nobody can that has not. And nobody can think without anxiety who has not learned to do it. You will never refrain from anxious thought, unless you are taught that it is your duty as well as your privilege. One thing is certain—that he who learns how to fore-think without anxious forethought, must do it beforehand. If my watch breaks, and I am in the wilderness, and I would fain repair it, I can not learn watch-making on the spot, in order to repair my watch. I should have learned the trade beforehand. Then I could have applied my knowledge of it to the case in hand. If a man is set to make calculations and work out problems in astronomy before he has studied arithmetic, he can not gather up, on the spot, the knowledge that he needs for making those calculations. If a man would calculate an eclipse, or any process of navigation, or what not, he must have a knowledge of figures beforehand. And if a man would be able to meet an event in a particular way, he should prepare himself for it before it comes. The preparation must precede the event. If a man is generally learned, he can apply his general learning to special cases. But when a special case comes, it is too late for him to get the general learning to apply to that special case.

In regard to forethought, it requires such a carriage of life, such a training of thought, such a training of the mind to comprehend the divine providence, such a training of our feelings and processes, that when the time of trouble comes, a man can stand calm, and think as far as it is profitable to think, and no further than that.

A man is like a horse. An unbroken horse will run away on some great fright. An intelligent and well-broken horse will not. And a man that is well trained in time of trouble stands still and holds himself steadily. A man that is not well broken just at that time breaks the halter, and rushes down the steep precipice, it may be, or sticks fast in the morass, and does damage to himself and all that he carries. There are very few men that have ever been well broken. As a general rule, men have not learned to think prudently, calmly, with faith, with hope, with cheer, and, above all, with an unfaltering confidence in that God who reigns now, and is to reign in all future time.

It will be asked, further, "Are there no exceptions in great emergencies? You do not mean to teach us that, if a sudden calamity befall a man, if tremendous dangers overtake him, if great losses stare him in the face, he can always be calm?" I do not mean to teach exactly that; but I do mean to teach that calmness in sudden danger is an attribute of manhood, and that it is within the reach of all who will cultivate it.

It is easier for some to cultivate it than for others; but it is possible for all.

It is the very ideal of true manhood, not to be suppressed. A man should lay it down in his mind, when he begins life, "I am, and I will be superior to my circumstances. I never will be put in a place that I am not adequate to." "I have learned," says Paul, "in all conditions therewith to be content. I know how to abound, and how to be abased." A man should take that conception, and say, going through life, "There shall nothing befall me that I am not adequate to bear."

Can a man do that? He can. He should. It is not so very difficult as men think. It only requires that one should have a real faith in heaven, a real faith in God, a real faith in the love of God to him, and a real faith in the joy that is not far from him. With that it could be done, and could be done easily. We do it in a small way all the time.

If I am a little child, and some one has given me a peach, and I am carrying it daintily in my hand, and an ugly boy behind me snatches it from me, and runs away, I mourn over the loss of that peach. Suppose, however, I am the owner of a hundred acres of peach-trees, and the boughs are all loaded with peaches, and I am walking along with a peach in my hand, and an ugly boy snatches it from me? I look at him, and say, "That is an unmannered cub; but then, what do I care for the peach? I have ten thousand more of them right over the fence."

Come up and steal some of my flowers, any of you that want to, next summer. I shall not miss them. I have so many that you might take a wheelbarrow load, and I should have enough the next morning. I can conceive, however, that a seamstress, up in an attic, might have a little tea-rose, the only thing she had which savored of taste, and a present from her mother, who died, leaving her an orphan; and I can conceive how desolate she might feel, if the rats had gnawed it and destroyed it, or if some one had stolen it. But you can not trouble me so. You may take fifty roses, and I will have five hundred left. You can not make me poor by taking my flowers, I have such an abundance.

If a man has nothing but what grows in this life, you can make him poor and unhappy; but if a man believes in God, and believes in heaven, and believes in the joy that awaits him there; if all the things that are said in the New Testament are real to him, how are you going to bankrupt him? How are you going to overthrow so lordly a spirit as his who has heard God say, "Thou art my son"? Son of God—yes, prince; heir with Christ to all things—forever and forever heir! How is any sudden trouble to run in upon him? In the

full consciousness of his estate; in the joy and dignity of his relationship, how shall any man harm him?

But you can make such a one cry. Crying is good. Crying washes out the channels. You can make such a man's heart ache. Heartache is good. It is medicine. It does men good to cry; it does men good to ache; and it does men good to feel that they have had their hands somewhat rudely wrenched from idols. But that is different from being overcome, and dismayed, and fevered, and annoyed, and worried, and pursued by verminous care through life. You can not do that to a man that believes in God, that believes in the Holy Ghost, and that believes in Jesus, who loved him so that he gave himself for him, and of whom it is said, "Having given his Son, shall he not also, with him, freely give us all needed things?" Who can separate such a man from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Things present—all the wild confusion of present things; things to come—the threatenings that rise, spectres, in the future—can these separate a man from his hope? Can things above, or things below? Nothing can. Nothing this side the grave, and nothing beyond the grave. Nothing in time, and nothing in eternity. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Here is courage, here is faith, for you. The child may have it. A philosopher can have nothing better—a faith that equalizes the road of life; a faith that extracts poison from suffering, while the suffering yet remains. Here is the faith of Immanuel, God with us; an ever-present Help in time of trouble; the faithful God; the covenant-keeping God; the God that does exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think. A man's strength does not stand in himself, but in leaning on God. The middle of the Atlantic is as safe as any other part, when a storm is raging. And a child is as safe as a strong man; because, if the ship does not go down, both are preserved; and if it does go down, they are both drowned. The difference in their strength is nothing when it is the Atlantic.

And so, men's strength in life is not in their wisdom and potency. The strength of men lies in the massive strength of Jehovah. It is in the providence of God. It is in the presence of God. It is the conscious love of God in the human soul that makes a man strong and invincible.

Suppose every thing should befall a man that could happen to him, what would it matter? How long would it be before he would be out of the reach of suffering? Where are the fathers? Where are the Puritans that died the first winter along the coast of Massachusetts? Their trouble was long since over. They have forgotten it, unless now and then thought comes to raise a higher strain of triumph. Where are the witnesses of God that perished in dungeons?

Where are the men that suffered cruelties rather than abandon their faith? Where are the uncrowned kings that made the earth rich? Where are they whose neck the halter found, and whose body was found by the rack? The whole creation has groaned and travailed over the sufferings of men who are now where no suffering can get to them.

Life is but a handbreadth. Each year is not so much as the bead that the beauty wears about her neck. Pearl though it be, or iron, it soon passes away. The places that know you will soon know you no more forever. The cares that made you fret yesterday are already below the horizon. The troubles that make you anxious to-day will not be troubles when you meet them. But what if they were? A cloud no bigger than a man's hand is swelling and filling the whole heaven. What then? To-day its bolts may smite you; but to-morrow you will be in heaven. Your children have died and gone home; but what of that? Soon you will follow them. Your friends have gone on before; but what of that? You will soon be with them. Your life is full of troubles and mischiefs; but what of that? Those mischiefs and troubles are nearly over—nearer than you think. The glorious future is almost yours.

O Grave! thy hand crowns as no monarch can. Knighted are we, not by the touch of the sword of any soldier, or king, or prince. Trouble, it is, that lays its sword on men's shoulders, and says, "Rise up, sir knight!" There are things in this life that give men great victories all the way through; but oh! the victory of one moment in the future is worth more than all those earthly victories. One look into heaven pays better than the whole experience of a life of joy here. And the blessedness of the world to come ought to take away from this world all its frets, all its fears, all its disasters, all its troubles; and we ought to be ashamed to be as anxious as we are.

Christian brethren, scour up your Bibles. Scour them until you can see your face in them. Take the whole armor of God to yourselves again. Avail yourselves of these precious truths and assurances of God. Oh! how you have treated yourselves, to say nothing about men's treatment of you! How you fall below your privileges! I do, too. I am the best man in the world to preach to you; for I practice almost every thing that I warn you against! I get angry, and then I laugh at myself. I get proud. That is the way I understand so well about you. I am worldly; and for that reason I understand how barren a thing it is to seek the things of the world. I am a man of like passions with yourselves, and I know you. I do not need to go into your houses to find you out. I have a faithful monitor that tells me about every thing that men are and that men do in this life. We are all of us, almost, living without our crowns on. Let us look for

our crowns. Let us put them on our head. If they are crowns of thorns, let us remember that the Master wore such a crown. Though for the moment they make blood-spots, let us remember that by blood the world has learned to live better. Lift up your heads. Lift up your hearts. Have you committed yourself to God? Have you given your heart to God? Do you think he will not be able to take care of you?

Shall a child cry when the mother takes it up at night out of a frightful dream? No. The child seeks its mother's bosom, and is at rest. Shall God's great arm be round about you, and shall the bosom of unfailing love be your supply, and shall you go moaning and crying as if you were orphans and were neglected? Oh! let the light of Christ's love, the joy of his presence, the opening of the heavens so that you shall see him as he is, redeem you from anxious care. Which of you can, by taking thought, add one foot to his stature? What good will it do you to be troubled? It will only make your state worse. On the other hand, how beautiful and joyful are the remunerations of faith! Live, then, by faith, and not by sight.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.*

WE thank thee, Almighty God, for all the things which thou hast made our children teach us. How much do we know of ourselves that we never should have known but for our offspring! How much do we know of thee that we never should have known but for our children! How much do we know of thy government and of thy feelings which no language could have interpreted to us, but which we have learned from those who are so much weaker than we are, and who are so far below us! How much thou hast taught us of time, and how much of eternity! Many as are the pains that we have had, carrying burdens; much as we have had of care; much as we have suffered from sorrows and bereavements, thou hast paid us back a thousand fold, for all our trouble at the hands of our dear little children. We thank thee for them; for that blessed estate into which, by them, we are brought; for all the sanctities of love in the household; for all the disclosures of truth in the affections thereof.

And now, O Lord! we thank thee for the mercy which thou hast shown such of us as have children grown up and entered into life. We thank thee for all thy great goodness to them, and to us through them.

We beseech of thee, O Lord! that thou wilt look upon the children of this church; upon all that have been brought with consecration into the sanctuary; upon all that have been offered with prayers and tears in the closet. We beseech of thee, that thou wilt accept the desire of parents' hearts; and that thou wilt inspire them with wisdom and fidelity, that they may be able to bring up their children in such a way that when they are old they shall not depart from integrity and truth and piety.

Bless in especial the dear children that have been brought hither this morning. We hear the voice, in their wails, of life coming upon them. Sorrows are awaiting them; temptations shall beset them; tears shall be wrung from them. And yet, O God! thou art stronger than sorrow, and thou canst carry them through crying and through tribulation, and save them yet to great joy here, and to immortality hereafter. We can not ask that sorrows, which prophesy themselves

* Immediately following the baptism of children.

already, should not come. Since thou hast been made perfect through suffering, why should we not be made perfect through suffering? But we commend them, in this stormy world, with its temptations and sins, to thy fatherly thought and care and guidance. Oh! take care of them, that they may not stumble with fatal downfall. Sanctify affliction to them, and temptation itself, that they may grow strong and vanquish it.

And may the parents of these children, who have offered them up in the midst of their brethren, and signified their earnest desire and purpose to bring them up in the fear of God, be strengthened to do it. May they believe, and truly believe, that they have the sympathy of the brethren of this church, and that our prayers shall go forth for them as well as for ourselves. And we beseech of thee, O Lord! that thou wilt make us to feel more and more that we are one household grouped together. And though our number is so large, and we are so distributed that one can not know all, yet we rejoice that we are as those who live in one country, to whom all the country and all the people are related.

Thou hast made this church blessed hitherto. Continue to bless it, in its children, in its households, in its youth. We thank thee that so many have grown up here, and already are proved in an honorable manhood. We thank thee that so many have grown up to woman's estate, and are themselves rearing children for the Lord.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt accept our thanks for all thy great mercies shown to us. We take courage every day. We are hopeful of the future. The memory of thy goodness inspires us with courage and with trust for the time to come.

We commit to thee now, the interests of all the parents, and all the children, and all the youth in our congregation, and pray that they may be shielded from harm, and brought up in sovereign virtue, in true piety, in the fear of the Lord, and in the love of men.

And we pray that thou wilt go forth with thy work everywhere. Gather into thy churches the young. Inspire thy ministering servants with more power, with clearer discrimination of truth, and with a more earnest and zealous heart for the proclamation of it.

May thy cause spread everywhere. May the nations of the earth be visited by thy salvation. May Jew and Gentile be gathered in as the fullness of the Lord. And to thy name shall be the praise of our salvation. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, wilt thou grant thy blessing to rest on the word spoken this morning. May it search us; may it find out our weak places; may it be as rain on parched ground; may it come to us, we beseech of thee, with admonition, in time of need, to call us back from folly and frivolity. May it enable us to lift up ourselves again, and walk erect, bearing the hope of our sonship. May we also bear in our demeanor the witness that we are the sons of God. Ennoble us. May we think and feel nobler. May we live more nobly. Oh! that men, looking upon us, might say, "Better, now, understand I God." Grant that experience. We ask not to be perfect. We ask not to be any thing but weak, if we may lie in thine arm. We are willing to be poor, if we may only take thy riches. We are willing to weep, if it but cleanses our eyes to behold afar off the things that concern our peace. We are willing to say, "Lord, thy will be done." O blessed Will! O glorious Will! O Will of all love, and of all grace, and of all good in time to come! be thou done in us, and round about us, and in all the world. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be the praise. *Amen.*

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Surplus,	.	.	.	1,566,854	10
Cash Assets,	.	.	.	2,066,854	10

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
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ASSETS.

Cash, Balance in Bank,	\$145,795 43
Bonds and Mortgages, being first lien on Real Estate,	1,178,965 00
Loans on Stocks, payable on demand,	409,662 00
United States Stocks, (market value,)	1,404,743 50
State and Municipal Stocks and Bonds, (market value,)	451,305 00
Bank Stocks, (market value,)	128,976 00
Interest due on 1st January, 1869,	38,503 17
Balance in hand of Agents and in course of transmission,	95,619 20
Bills Receivable, (for Premiums on Inland Risks, etc.,)	14,000 94
Other Property, Miscellaneous Items,	56,157 85
Premiums due and uncollected on Policies issued at Office,	6,873 40
Steamer Magnet and Wrecking Apparatus,	35,536 81
Government Stamps on hand,	144 00

Total, **\$3,966,282 30**

LIABILITIES.

Claims for Losses outstanding on 1st January, 1869,	\$104,097 48
Due Stockholders on account of 27th, 28th, 29th Dividends,	2,740 00

\$106,837 48

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